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The programme to policy linkage: The fulfilment of election pledges on socio-economic policy in the Netherlands, 1986–1998

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Abstract. To what extent are the contents of party election programmes congruent with subsequent government policy actions? Existing research on the fulfilment of pre-election pledges focuses on systems of government in which executives formed by a single parties are the norm. This study extends this research to coalition systems of government. Specific policy proposals made by the main Dutch parties in their recent election programmes are identified and compared with subsequent government policy actions. Hypotheses about the conditions under which pledges are more likely to be acted upon are formulated and tested. Although clear linkages between election programmes and subsequent policies are found, pledges made by prospective coalition parties in the Netherlands are less likely to be acted upon than those made by prospective governing parties in the United Kingdom. Prominent features of cabinet government, such as the allocation of ministerial portfolios and the coalition policy agreement, are found to influence the likelihood of pledges being fulfilled. In addition, consensus between parties is also found to increase the likelihood of government actions responding to election pledges.

Introduction

This article is about the congruence between the contents of party election programmes published before elections and subsequent government policy actions. This stage of the democratic process is central to theories of how democracies do and should operate. The mandate theory of democracy attributes particular importance to this ‘programme to policy linkage’ (Birch 1975; Klingemann et al. 1994). Political parties that form governments are said to receive a mandate to translate their proposals into government policies. Modern democracies are party democracies, since political representatives are bound to the election programme of their party (Budge & Newton et al. 1997: 261–263).

In view of its importance many scholars have devoted considerable attention to this stage of the democratic process (Pomper & Lederman 1980; Rose 1980; Rallings 1987; Kalogeropoulou 1989; Klingemann et al. 1994; Royed 1996). In many such studies, the specific policy commitments, election pledges, made by parties in their election programmes are identified. The ex-

tent to which these pledges are congruent with subsequent government policy is then evaluated. This is also the approach employed in this paper. Another approach to the study of the programme to policy linkage is the saliency approach which examines the congruence between the emphasis parties place on different policy themes and subsequent government spending patterns on related policy areas (Klingemann et al. 1994). The relationship between the saliency approach and the approach used in this study is discussed in Royed (1996) and Thomson (1999a).

Existing research on the fulfilment of election pledges focuses on government systems in which a single party normally forms the government executive: the United Kingdom, Canada, the USA, and Greece. A recent review of the literature concluded that 'there is something of a gap in terms of our knowledge of the fulfilment of pledges in coalition systems of government that are far more typical of modern Europe' (Gallagher, Laver & Mair 1995: 374). The research presented here seeks to make a contribution to this neglected issue by examining the fulfilment of election pledges in three recent government periods in the Netherlands. As will become clear, the extension of this approach to coalition governments also allows the effects of a number of mechanisms of coalition government to be examined. In particular, hypotheses will be formulated and tested regarding the effects of the distribution of ministerial portfolios and the formulation of coalition agreements between prospective governing parties on the likelihood of pledge fulfilment.

In the following section, the hypotheses to be tested are formulated. This includes a discussion of some of the main findings from the existing literature, and propositions forwarded in the literature on coalition governance. In the third section, the research design employed in the present study is described. This includes a discussion of the empirical focus on pledges made by Dutch parties, the measurement of pledges and their fulfilment, and several examples of election pledges and apparently congruent government actions. This is intended to provide insight into the substance of the quantitative analyses presented in the fourth section, in which the hypotheses are tested.

Expectations regarding the fulfilment of election pledges

Discursive variants of mandate theory can be found in the work of postwar commentators on liberal democracy, whose work has become known as 'the responsible party model' (APSA 1950; Friedrich 1963). Despite the changing nature of electoral behaviour and party organisation, the mandate theory is of enduring relevance to contemporary discussions of democracy (e.g., Dahl 1991; Klingemann et al. 1994; Budge & Newton et al. 1997). Mandate theory has a number of observable implications at various stages of the democratic

process, of which the programme to policy linkage is one. Downs' book *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957) contains perhaps the most succinct statement of mandate theory (Klingemann et al. 1994: 31). Downs' model consists of two sets of actors: political parties and voters. Politicians are assumed to be motivated by the goal of obtaining the material benefits associated with holding government office. Voters are assumed to be motivated by securing government policies that are most favourable to their own interests. Accordingly, parties formulate election programmes containing policy initiatives in order to win votes. Voters will, other things being equal, vote for the party that adopts policies closest to their own preferences. In a party system consisting of two parties, the party that receives the most votes becomes the governing party. In order to secure its chances of success at the next election, this party has an incentive to enact the policies it supported at the last election. In party systems that consist of three or more parties, there will, according to Downs and other proponents of the responsible party model, be a less effective transmission of voters' policy preferences into government actions. Nevertheless, even in multi-party systems the same basic behavioural mechanisms will be present that motivate governing parties to enact the policy commitments they made at the last election.

Hypothesis 1: Election pledges made by parties that enter government office after the elections are more likely to be fulfilled than those made by parties that enter the opposition after the elections.

The concept of the party mandate posits a particular pattern of congruence between the contents of election programmes and subsequent government policies (Klingemann et al. 1994: 48–51). Strictly speaking, the proposition that pledges made by parties that enter the opposition after the elections is not an element of mandate theory: 'A pure mandate theory assumes that winning is everything. Losers' programs are ignored or repudiated. Winners' programs are enacted' (Klingemann et al. 1994: 48). A more reasonable variant of mandate theory, however, recognises that the contents of losing parties' election programmes also contain responses to legitimate demands by societal groups. The incorporation of these demands into government policies can be beneficial to the stability of, and support for, the government. These demands continue to exert influence on policy makers, even when the parties that responded to them enter the opposition after the elections. In other words, elections should have some impact on government policies, but democracy also demands moderation and the incorporation of losers' demands (Klingemann et al. 1994: 49). The inclusion of prospective opposition parties' election programmes becomes all the more pertinent when the analysis of the programme to policy linkage focuses on a consensus democracy as defined

by Lijphart, such as the Netherlands (Lijphart 1999). The mandate model of the programme to policy linkage is commonly thought to be associated with majoritarian democracies. Klingemann et al. (1994: 44–48) also specify an ‘agenda model’ in which the contents of party programmes are translated into government policies regardless of whether they enter government office after the elections. Such a model may be more applicable to democracies in which the results of elections do not provide clear indications of winning and losing parties.¹

The second hypothesis concerns the effect of institutions on the programme to policy linkage. From an institutional perspective, it is to be expected that the correspondence between what parties propose prior to elections and the policies they pursue when in office is less pronounced in coalition systems of government than in systems with single party governments (Klingemann et al. 1994: 33–34). Why should this be the case? Election programmes contain parties’ expressed preferences regarding the distribution of the resources available to government. To the extent that the policies proposed by coalition partners are in direct disagreement with each other, it is inevitable that not all of these proposals can be enacted. Direct confrontations between parties, however, occur infrequently. It is more common for parties to compete with each other indirectly, by focusing their attention on the areas of policy on which they have a relative advantage over their competitors. So, for example, parties that oppose the maintenance and expansion of social security programmes are unlikely to argue explicitly for their retrenchment. Instead, they make proposals on issues, such as the expansion of individual economic enterprise, that are indirectly opposed to those of more traditional leftist parties. The proposition that parties ‘talk past’ each other in this way is central to the saliency theory of party competition (Budge, Robertson & Hearl 1987: 389). Nevertheless, policy proposals that are not directly incompatible with each other draw on the same pool of available resources. In this sense, such proposals compete with each other.

Hypothesis 2: Election pledges made by parties that enter coalition governments are less likely to be fulfilled than those made by parties that enter single party governments in parliamentary democracies.

This hypothesis applies to coalition governments and single party governments with secure parliamentary majorities. The available evidence on the effect of institutions on the strength of the linkage between parties’ specific policy proposals and subsequent government policies is provided by a study comparing US party platforms and the election programmes of British parties. Royed (1996) concludes that pledges made by governing parties in the United Kingdom are more likely to be fulfilled than those made by presidential

parties in the USA. Lijphart distinguishes two dimensions on the basis of which democracies can be distinguished from each other: the executives-parties dimension and the federal-unitary dimension. Democracies at one extreme of the executives-parties dimension have a concentration of executive power in single party majority cabinets, executive-legislature relationships in which the executive is dominant, two party systems, majoritarian electoral systems and pluralist interest group systems. Democracies at one extreme of the federal-unitary dimension have unitary and centralised government, concentration of legislative power in unicameral legislatures, flexible constitutions, an absence of judicial review of legislation and central banks that are dependent on the executive. The institutional differences between the USA and the UK are located primarily in the federal-unitary dimension, rather than the executives-parties dimension (Lijphart 1999). The above hypothesis on the effect of coalition governance refers to an aspect of the executives-parties dimension on which the UK and the Netherlands differ substantially from each other.

Hypothesis 3: Election pledges are more likely to be fulfilled if a party that supports them receives responsibility for the relevant ministerial post.

The third hypothesis concerns the distribution of ministerial posts between the coalition partners. Control over bureaucratic officials is one of the resources available to governing parties that enables them to fulfil their election pledges. This control, held by politicians in ministerial posts, is a resource that must be distributed between the members of the governing coalition. Research on coalition formation and policy making within coalitions emphasises the importance of the allocation of ministerial portfolios between parties (Laver & Shepsle 1994; Laver & Shepsle 1996). The portfolio allocation model of policy making in coalitions advances the proposition that members of governing coalitions have relatively little say in policy areas over which they do not receive ministerial control. It is argued that policy making in modern states is structured by the division of policy areas into the separate jurisdictions of departments of government. Due to the complexity of policy making and the desire to safeguard their own departmental jurisdictions, ministers confine their influence attempts and the development of their own subject area expertise to those policy areas that fall under the jurisdiction of their own ministries. 'All of this results in the forecast, shared by each of those involved in building and maintaining a government, that government policy outputs in any given policy area are best predicted by looking at the position of the party in control of the portfolio with jurisdiction over the policy area concerned' (Laver & Shepsle 1996: 42).

Hypothesis 4: Election pledges to maintain the status quo are more likely to be congruent with government policies after the elections than pledges to introduce some kind of policy change.

Previous studies of pledge fulfilment reported that less radical pledges, and in particular pledges to maintain the status quo, are more likely to be congruent with subsequent government policies than pledges to introduce more radical policy change (Pomper & Lederman 1980; Royed 1996). Research on public policy inheritance suggests why this should be the case. Rose and Davies (1994) argue that it is far more difficult for parties to enact policy changes than to accept the legacy bequeathed to them by previous governments. Once a decision is taken, it becomes entrenched in bureaucratic procedures. This institutionalisation is said to foster an inertia in public policy that is particularly difficult for elected officials to challenge (Rose & Davies 1994: 26–37). The inheritance of previously enacted policy programmes and decisions is often viewed as an impediment to the effective functioning of democratic choice. This, however, fails to take into consideration the fact that the decisions inherited after any given election were taken by politicians in past administrations. Furthermore, maintenance of the status quo is often the result of choices made by democratically elected officials (Schmidt 1996: 169). Even in election programmes concerned primarily with outlining the reforms that parties wish to make, pledges to maintain the status quo can also be found.

Hypothesis 5: Election pledges to which parties attach higher levels of saliency are more likely to be fulfilled than those to which they attach lower levels of saliency.

The importance of a policy proposal to the party that supports it depends not only on the amount of change involved in the realisation of that proposal. Clearly, a party may attach a high level of saliency to a pledge to maintain the status quo, in the sense that it would defend its position vigorously if challenged to do so. The distinction between the concepts of policy position and saliency is made clear in the literature on rational choice models of collective decision making (e.g., Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1985; Bueno de Mesquita & Stokman 1994). In these models, actors take policy positions on issues. Actors' policy positions are distinct from the levels of saliency that they attach to these issues. It is therefore possible for a stakeholder to take a fairly moderate position on an issue, while attaching an extremely high level of saliency to it. A commonly used operational definition of saliency in this tradition is the extent to which a stakeholder would be willing to put into effect its potential capability to influence the outcome of the decision on the issue concerned, if that issue came up during the course of interaction with other stakeholders. Rallings (1997: 13) noted that pledges that are 'clearly

in keeping with a party's general philosophy (e.g. the British Conservative Party's promise in 1970 to encourage the sale of council houses)' are more likely to be acted upon. However, the effect of saliency on the fulfilment of election pledges has yet to be investigated systematically.

Hypothesis 6: Election pledges that are the subject of consensus between parties are more likely to be fulfilled than those that are not.

The sixth hypothesis refers to the effect of consensus between parties. It seems plausible that policy proposals supported by more than one of the main parties enjoy broader support, and that this would ease the transition from proposal to action. Indeed, the existing research provides evidence in support of the hypothesis (Pomper & Lederman 1980: 162–163; Royed 1996: 65–66).

Three types or patterns of consensus can be distinguished in multiparty systems in which there are at least two governing parties and two opposition parties: consensus between governing parties, between governing and opposition parties, and between opposition parties. The first type of consensus would be expected to contribute most to the likelihood of pledge fulfilment, given that such pledges have the weight of more than one governing party behind them. Of the three types of consensus, the third type, consensus between opposition parties, would be expected to contribute least to pledge fulfilment. Although such pledges may be assumed to have broader support than those supported by one opposition party only, they do not have the explicit support of a party that holds government office after the elections.

Hypothesis 7: Election pledges are more likely to be fulfilled if they are supported explicitly in the coalition agreement, than if they are not.²

Among the factors expected to influence the likelihood of pledge fulfilment are the outcomes of the negotiations between the prospective coalition partners *after* the elections. The coalition agreement is a document agreed on by the prospective coalition partners after the election, specifying the policy intentions of the new government. In countries where single party governments are the norm, the election programme of the winning party becomes in effect the government's policy agenda. In coalition systems, the government's policy agenda has to be constructed by the coalition partners. According to one view, the formulation of the agreement is said to provide parties with an opportunity to obtain a commitment from the prospective government to the enactment of their own preferred policies (Browne & Dreijmanis 1982: 349–350; Peterson & De Ridder 1986). Although the coalition agreement is not a legally binding document, reciprocal control is a mechanism that may well ensure that these agreements are carried out. Each party knows that failure to carry out the proposals supported by its partner/s may result in the failure

to enact its own policy proposals. There is a strong normative obligation on parties to remain faithful to the agreements they have made. For these reasons, pre-election pledges that are supported in coalition agreements are expected to foreshadow government actions.

Identifying election pledges and their fulfilment

The selected cases

The three government periods selected for study provide a variety of contexts, in terms of combinations of governing parties and economic conditions, in which the linkages between election programmes and government actions can be investigated. The empirical focus of this research consists of the fulfilment of the election pledges on socio-economic issues made by the four main Dutch parties in their election programmes for the 1986, 1989, and 1994 national parliamentary elections for the Lower House (*Tweede Kamer*). The parties selected for analysis are the Labour Party (PvdA: *Partij van der Arbeid*), the Democrats 66 (D66: *Democraten 66*), the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA: *Christen Democratisch Appèl*), and the Liberal Party (VVD: *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie*). These parties were selected because they are generally considered to be the ones with 'governing potential'. That is to say, some combination of these four parties is expected to form the governing coalition. Most political commentators would agree that, at least as far as the elections studied here are concerned, the ideological positions of these parties can be placed on a left-right dimension in the following order: PvdA-D66-CDA-VVD. Together, these parties received an average of 88 per cent of the votes cast at these elections.

After the 1986 election, the CDA/VVD coalition that had governed since 1982 remained in office. Like its predecessor, this cabinet attempted to curb the growth of the large public sector. The early termination of the CDA/VVD cabinet in 1989, a year before the next regularly scheduled election, was precipitated by a disagreement between the parliamentary Liberal Party and the government on taxation policy. A coalition consisting of the CDA and PvdA was formed after the 1989 election. This cabinet was plagued by a sharp downturn in the economy and rising numbers of welfare recipients that led to painful retrenchments in social security programmes. Coupled with the fact that the PvdA entered the coalition after a long period in opposition, this cabinet period was a trying one for the PvdA in particular. After the 1994 election, the so-called purple coalition, consisting of the PvdA, D66 and VVD was formed. This meant that, for the first time since 1917, the governing coalition did not contain a Christian Democratic party (the

CDA or one of its predecessors). The 1994–1998 coalition enjoyed a relatively favourable economic situation in comparison with previous years and other European countries. Economic growth was at a high, employment rose, and the budget deficit was reduced successfully. This undoubtedly eased co-operation between the historical adversaries, the PvdA and the VVD.

In order to gauge the implications of empirical findings correctly, it is essential to consider carefully the unique characteristics of the cases selected for analysis, and what effects these might have on the results. Given the selection of these cases, are some of the hypotheses more or less likely to be confirmed? There are indeed certain features of Dutch politics in the selected time period that lead to particular expectations regarding two of the hypotheses specified in the previous section: the third hypothesis on the effect of the allocation of ministerial portfolios, and the seventh hypothesis on the effect of support for pledges in the coalition agreement. Andeweg & Bakema (1994) consider the relevance of the ministerial portfolio allocation model of coalition policy making to politics in the Netherlands. Their discussion suggests that Dutch government ministers in recent cabinets are less autonomous from their cabinet colleagues than is implied by this model. Ministerial autonomy has become constrained by the development of strong collective cabinet decision making.

One of the reasons for this decline in ministerial autonomy is the increased politicisation of the cabinet, accompanied by a strengthening of the links between ministers and their parliamentary parties. This has increased the extent to which ministers feel compelled to interfere in their cabinet colleagues' portfolios, and the extent to which they feel justified in doing so (Andeweg & Bakema 1994: 63). The increasing complexity of policy making has made necessary the creation of a number of mechanisms to co-ordinate policy making in different ministerial departments. One of these is the appointment of 'secretaries of state', who as junior ministers, are subordinate to ministers, but have their own areas of policy responsibility. These posts are usually filled by individuals who do not belong to the same party as the ministers under whom they serve. They are said to play a 'watchdog' role, ensuring that the actions of the minister are acceptable to their own party. Therefore, there are reasons to expect less empirical support for the third hypothesis in the Netherlands than in other countries. With regard to the seventh hypothesis, on the effect of the coalition agreement, there is more reason to anticipate empirical support for this hypothesis in recent Dutch cabinets than in governing coalitions in which these documents played less prominent roles. The lengthy negotiations typical of Dutch coalition formation result in detailed agreements setting out the prospective coalitions' policy intentions. In some other countries and time periods, the coalition agreements signed by prospective coalition parties are

much shorter in length and less detailed; sometimes, these documents are not made public.

Measurement

The measurements used in assessing election pledges and their fulfilment are similar to those used by Royed, whose research included an analysis of the pledges made by parties in the United Kingdom (1996). This makes possible a comparison of pledge fulfilment in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Pledges are defined as statements in which parties express unequivocal support for proposed government policy actions or non-actions that are testable. The inclusion of a 'testability' requirement is important for obtaining reliable measurements of the fulfilment of election pledges. The criteria used to judge the fulfilment of pledges are in principle provided by the writers of election programmes, not by the researcher. The reliability of the identification of pledges in the election programmes was tested and found to be strong.³

The judgements on the fulfilment of election pledges were made following a search for government decisions, parliamentary legislation and executive orders, that were congruent or incongruent with the proposals supported in the pledges. Such proposals may include, for example, the reduction of a particular rate or type of taxation, or certain adjustments to welfare benefit programmes. The search began by reading policy reviews of the main sub-fields of socio-economic policy, and annually published reviews of parliamentary debates. This general orientation allowed the election pledges to be placed in the context of the policy developments and debates of the day. The main part of the search was carried out using a CD ROM database containing references to, and short descriptions of, all government decisions taken since 1 January 1986. If an election pledge was not followed by a congruent government action during the subsequent governing period, the pledge was categorised as not acted upon. The variable 'fulfilment' was defined as one consisting of three categories: 'not fulfilled', 'partially fulfilled', and 'fully fulfilled'. The inclusion of a partially fulfilled category is made necessary by the fact that some policy action may be taken in the direction indicated by the pledge, falling short of full realisation of the proposal in question. The reliability of the measurement of fulfilment was tested by presenting subject area specialists with a selection of the pledges, and asking them to place these into one of the three fulfilment categories. It was found that the reliability of this three category indicator of fulfilment was satisfactory. However, if the variable is dichotomised into the categories 'fully/partially fulfilled', and 'not fulfilled', then the measurements are substantially more reliable. Therefore, in the multivariate tests of the hypotheses presented in section 4, this dichotomous measurement of fulfilment is used.⁴

Examples of election pledges and their fulfilment

To illustrate the statements that were identified as election pledges, and the government actions that constituted their fulfilment, this section contains a brief review of some of the pledges made in the policy area of welfare benefits. Table 1 also includes a list of some of the pledges made in the area of income tax. More generally, a qualitative investigation was carried out on the election pledges on which in this research project focuses. It was found that the election pledges were associated with the main policy developments as described in policy reviews written by subject area specialists. Election pledges were found on issues that are generally perceived to be societally relevant. Pledges were made on issues such as adjustments to the values of welfare benefits, the organisation and provision of health care, housing subsidies, student finance, employment rights, and levels of taxation.

After a period of expansion of welfare programmes that lasted until the 1970s, a policy of retrenchment began. This included a reduction in earnings-related welfare benefits for those who became unemployed, from 80 percent of their last earned salary to 70 percent between 1984 and 1986. It was in this context that the CDA/VVD cabinet was formed in 1986. Broadly speaking, the election programmes of both these parties revealed their intention to continue the policy of attempting to restrict the growth of welfare programmes. In its 1986 election programme, the PvdA was particularly critical of these policy developments, and pledged that earnings-related benefits would be increased to 75 per cent of the last earned income. The policies enacted during the 1986–1989 cabinet period were clearly more in line with those set out in the manifestos of the CDA and VVD. Earnings-related welfare benefits were not increased, and the value of other types of benefits remained frozen at their 1986 levels. The policy of restricting the growth of expenditure on welfare programmes was eased somewhat after the 1989 election and the formation of the CDA/PvdA cabinet. Instead of freezing the value of welfare benefits, they were increased in line with incomes in two of the four years in which this administration took a decision on the matter. These increases were judged to constitute a partial fulfilment of the proposal, supported by the PvdA and D66, to restore the coupling between increases in welfare benefits and increases in employees' incomes. There were clear differences of position between the parties that formed the governing coalition after the 1994 election. One salient issue was whether or not the value of welfare benefits should be adjusted in line with increases in incomes. Government policy during the 1994–1998 period was congruent with the PvdA's pledge to apply the coupling between benefits and incomes, and incongruent with the VVD's pledge to freeze benefits at their 1994 levels. The VVD's 1994 election programme was a particularly radical one; it contained proposals for

the introduction of a so-called basic system of welfare, in which the value of benefits that are related to the minimum wage would be reduced substantially. These proposals were opposed explicitly in the programmes of the PvdA and D66, in which it was stated that these benefits would remain at their present levels in relation to the minimum wage. These benefits were not reduced, and the VVD's pledge was unfulfilled, while the pledge supported by the PvdA and D66 was met.

Of course, policy measures were also taken that were not preceded by election pledges. The example of adjustments to the welfare programme for the disabled suggests that there are also policy developments not foreseen in parties' election programmes. As mentioned above, the 1989-1994 government period was a trying one for the PvdA in particular. One reason for this was the dramatic and unexpected growth in the numbers of recipients of disability benefits. After a political crisis that almost led to the break-up of this coalition, it was decided that measures would be taken to restrict the growth of this programme. These measures were not, however, foreshadowed by specific pledges in any of the election programmes. After this policy development was set in motion during the 1989-1994 government period, the parties responded to it. In 1993 came the imposition of more obligations on employers to pay and reintegrate employees who had become unfit for work. In their programmes for the 1994 election, the CDA and D66 pledged support for the expansion of these responsibilities. In accordance with these pledges, legislation was introduced by which employers became responsible for paying their employees during the first year of sickness. This was a controversial piece of legislation that raised concerns that employers would become even less likely to employ individuals whom they suspected of being prone to illness.

Analysis

The simplest way of testing the hypothesis, that election pledges made by parties that enter government are more likely to be fulfilled than those made by parties that do not, is to compare the percentages of pledges from each election programme that were acted upon in some way (Table 2). On the whole, Table 2 supports the hypothesis. Whether the comparison is based on the percentages of 'fully' fulfilled pledges, or those that were 'not' fulfilled, the conclusion is the same. A higher proportion of pledges made by parties that entered the governing coalition were acted upon than those made by parties that entered opposition. The first hypothesis is also confirmed by the results of the more sophisticated multivariate test presented in Table 8. The multivariate analysis allows the effect of each of the variables on the likeli-

Table 1. Examples of election pledges on welfare and taxation

Summary of pledge (party, year)	Results*
Increase income related benefits to 75% of last earned income (PvdA, 1986)	NF
Apply coupling between benefits and incomes (D66, PvdA, 1989)	PF
Apply coupling between benefits and incomes (PvdA, 1994)	FF
Freeze benefits at 1994 levels (VVD, 1994)	NF
Reduce welfare entitlements for single people with and without children to 80% and 60% of the minimum wage respectively (VVD, 1994)	NF
Maintain welfare entitlements at present levels (D66, PvdA, 1994)	FF
Expand employers' responsibility for the payment of benefits during short term illness of their employees (CDA, D66, 1994)	FF
Reduce tax burden on incomes (CDA, D66, VVD, 1986)	FF
Reduce tax burden on incomes of those earning up to one and a half times the modal salary (PvdA, 1986)	FF
At the least, no increase in the tax burden (CDA, 1989)	NF
Reduce total burden of income tax (VVD, 1989)	NF
Levy social premiums on income subject to the second rate of income tax (PvdA, 1994)	NF
Reduce basic rate of income tax (CDA, D66, 1994)	FF
Reduce basic rate of income tax to 35 per cent (PvdA, 1994)	PF
Extend the set of incomes subject to the second rate of income tax in an upward direction (CDA, VVD, 1994)	FF
Reduce top rate of income tax (D66, 1994)	NF

*FF: Fully fulfilled; PF: Partially fulfilled; NF: Not fulfilled.

hood of pledge fulfilment to be estimated, while controlling for the effects of the other hypothesised explanatory variables. The dependent variable in this analysis is a dichotomous one that indicates whether a pledge to take a particular policy action was fulfilled at least partially.⁵ The coefficient in the row labelled 'Government' in Table 8 indicates that, controlling for the effects of the other variables, pledges supported by parties that took part in the coalition after the elections were 2.2 times more likely to be acted upon at least partially than those supported by parties that entered the opposition.

There are another two noteworthy features of Table 2 in relation to the mandate hypothesis. The first is the relatively low percentage of pledges made by the PvdA in 1989 that were fulfilled. After the 1989 election, a somewhat higher percentage of the opposition Liberal Party's pledges were 'fully' fulfilled (35%) than of those made by the governing Labour Party (29%). If both the 'fully' and 'partially' fulfilled pledges are considered together, a slightly

Table 2. The fulfilment of election pledges on socio-economic issues in the Netherlands, 1986–1998

1986	PvdA	D66	CDA	VVD
Fully	14% (16)	16% (11)	43% (36)	40% (44)
Partially	7% (8)	3% (2)	7% (6)	10% (11)
Not	79% (89)	81% (54)	50% (42)	50% (54)
Total socio-economic/tested	113	67	84	109
1989	PvdA	D66	CDA	VVD
Fully	29% (22)	20% (15)	45% (39)	35% (30)
Partially	16% (12)	9% (7)	8% (7)	8% (7)
Not	55% (42)	71% (54)	47% (40)	56% (48)
Total socio-economic/tested	76	76	86	85
1994	PvdA	D66	CDA	VVD
Fully	55% (31)	50% (54)	35% (31)	56% (30)
Partially	18% (10)	14% (15)	17% (15)	13% (7)
Not	27% (15)	37% (40)	48% (43)	31% (17)
Total socio-economic/tested	56	109	89	54

Percentages of the total numbers of tested pledges from each manifestos that were fully, partially, and not fulfilled (numbers of fully, partially and not fulfilled socio-economic pledges from each manifesto). Governing parties in bold.

higher percentage of the Labour Party's pledges were fulfilled than those of the opposition Liberal Party. This accords with the conventional wisdom that the 1989–1994 government period was a particularly difficult one for the Labour Party. The stagnation of economic growth and the painful retrenchments in social security entitlements during the so-called 'disability benefits crisis' were not foreseen at the time when the 1989 election programme was written. Second, with regard to the 1994 election programmes, it is notable that despite the evidence of a mandate pattern of linkage, a relatively large number of the Christian Democrats' policy proposals were fulfilled. During this government period, the CDA was criticised by political commentators for not providing a vigorous enough opposition to the cabinet. Various explanations have been offered for this, such as the absence of experience with the role of opposition within the CDA, the preoccupation with internal re-appraisals in the aftermath of the 1994 election defeat, and the favourable economic situation enjoyed during this period. The figures in Table 2 suggest another explanation. It is difficult for a party to provide vigorous opposition

to a government that enacts policies that are congruent with many of its own policy commitments.

Regarding variation in the fulfilment of pledges between government periods, it is most striking that a higher proportion of pledges made in the 1994 election programmes was fulfilled than in those of 1986 or 1989. The most obvious explanation for this difference is the favourable economic situation during the 1994–1998 government period. This created government income that could be used to finance pledges, such as the coupling of welfare benefits to incomes, and tax reductions. It is interesting to note that the 1994 election programmes were based on conservative forecasts of economic growth during the 1994–1998 period; actual growth turned out to be much higher. Therefore, despite the fact that the forecasts on which these election programmes were based proved to be inaccurate, relatively large proportions of the pledges they contained were acted upon. The results of the multivariate analysis presented in Table 8 also indicate the presence of significant variation between these three governing periods regarding the likelihood of pledge fulfilment.

Table 3 contains information relating to the second hypothesis: pledges made by parties that enter coalition governments are less likely to be fulfilled than those made by parties that enter single party governments in parliamentary democracies. The information contained in Table 3 was collected by Terry Royed (1992, 1996). The data collected by Royed were adjusted to make them comparable with those collected on the Dutch parties. A comparison of Table 2 with Table 3 supports the above hypothesis. Pledges made by parties that go on to form Dutch governments are substantially less likely to be acted upon than those made by parties that form single party governments in the United Kingdom. Even during the 1994–1998 government period, during which relatively large percentages of Dutch parties' pledges were translated into government actions, the percentages of governing parties' pledges that were 'not' fulfilled were high, if compared to the data on the British Conservative Party's pledges.⁶

Table 4 contains data relating to the third hypothesis, that pledges are more likely to be fulfilled if a party that supports them receives responsibility for the relevant ministerial post. Of the coalition parties' pledges that fell under their ministerial responsibility, 55 percent were fulfilled at least partially. Of the coalition parties' pledges that did not fall under their ministerial responsibility, only 36 percent were fulfilled at least partially. The hypothesis is also supported by the results of the multivariate analysis presented in Table 8. The coefficient in the row labelled 'Ministry' in Table 8 indicates that pledges supported by parties that were allocated the relevant ministerial portfolios after the elections were 1.6 times more likely to be fulfilled than pledges that were not supported by such a party. This finding is surprising considering the

Table 3. The fulfilment of election pledges made by the prospective governing party in the United Kingdom, 1979–1987

Fulfilment	1979			1983		
	Socio-economic	Other areas	Total	Socio-economic	Other areas	Total
Fully	72% (34)	43% (10)	63% (44)	73% (38)	86% (19)	77% (57)
Partially	15% (7)	43% (10)	24% (17)	10% (5)	9% (2)	9% (7)
Not	13% (6)	13% (3)	13% (9)	17% (9)	5% (1)	14% (10)
Total	100% (47)	99% (23)	100% (70)	100% (52)	100% (22)	100% (74)

Pledges by the Conservative Party in its 1979 and 1983 manifestos. Figures refer to percentages (and numbers) of pledges that fall into the row categories. Data were adjusted to be comparable with those referred to in Table 2. Source: Royed (1992).

Table 4. The allocation of ministerial portfolios on pledge fulfilment

Fulfilment	Did a coalition party that supported the pledge receive the relevant ministry?		
	No	Yes	Total
Partially/fully fulfilled	66 (36%)	107 (55%)	173 (46%)
Not fulfilled	119 (64%)	87 (45%)	206 (54%)
Total	185 (100%)	194 (100%)	379 (100%)

The data in this table exclude status quo pledges and pledges supported by prospective opposition parties only. Pledges supported by more than one governing party are counted as single pledges. This accounts for differences between these figures and those contained in Table 2.

reservations mentioned earlier about the relevance of the portfolio allocation model to Dutch politics.

The fourth hypothesis is that pledges to maintain the status quo are more likely to be fulfilled than pledges to introduce some kind of policy change. As in previous studies of election pledges, strong empirical support for this hypothesis was found. Table 5 provides information on the numbers of status quo pledges made by each of the parties in each election programme, and the numbers that were fulfilled. The largest numbers of status quo pledges were found in the 1986 election programmes of the CDA and the VVD. In both cases all of these status quo pledges were congruent with subsequent government policy. In all cases, a relatively large proportion of the status quo pledges were fulfilled, certainly when compared to the proportions of fulfilled pledges as a whole from the same election programmes (Table 2).⁷

The fifth hypothesis posits that pledges to which parties attach a higher level of saliency are more likely to be fulfilled than those to which they attach

Table 5. The fulfilment of status quo pledges on socio-economic policy

Year	PvdA	D66	CDA	VVD
1986	6/7	7/9	22/22	22/22
1989	8/12	5/7	8/9	13/14
1994	11/12	15/16	13/15	6/6

Number of fulfilled status quo pledges in the election programme/total number of status quo pledges in the election programme.

a lower level of saliency. The evidence does not support this hypothesis. The levels of saliency parties attached to their election pledges were measured using data collected by the Manifestos Research Group. These data consist of the emphasis parties placed on various policy themes in their election programmes. For the analysis presented in Table 8, it was assumed that parties attached higher levels of saliency to pledges within policy themes they emphasised more. The coefficient in the row labelled 'Saliency' in Table 8 indicates that pledges within salient policy themes are no more likely to be acted upon than pledges within policy themes less salient to the parties that made them.⁸

Table 6 contains information that allows us to address the effect of consensus between parties on the likelihood of pledge fulfilment. Of the pledges supported by more than one of the prospective coalition parties, 78 percent were categorised as at least partially fulfilled. By comparison, only 37 percent of the pledges supported by only one prospective coalition party were acted upon. When Dutch governing parties agree with each other, it would appear that they are as able to translate their policy proposals into government actions as governing parties in the United Kingdom. The results of the multivariate analysis in Table 8 provide a test of the consensus hypothesis and allow us to distinguish between the effects of different types of consensus. The first consensus coefficient, 'consensus between governing parties', indicates that pledges supported by more than one of the parties that went on to form part of the coalition were 3.1 times more likely to be fulfilled than those that were not. Pledges supported by at least one prospective governing party and a prospective opposition party were also more (1.5 times) more likely to be fulfilled; however, this is not statistically significant ($p = 0.16$). Consensus between opposition parties does not appear to increase the likelihood of pledge fulfilment.

There are relatively few instances of direct dissensus between parties evident in the direct relationships between their election pledges. This limits the

Table 6. Consensus among governing parties and pledge fulfilment

Fulfilment	Was the pledge supported by one or more than one coalition party?		
	One only	More than one	Total
Partially/fully fulfilled	112 (37%)	61 (78%)	173 (46%)
Not fulfilled	189 (63%)	17 (22%)	206 (54%)
Total	301 (100%)	78 (100%)	379 (100%)

The data in this table exclude status quo pledges and pledges supported by prospective opposition parties only. Pledges supported by more than one governing party are counted as single pledges. This accounts for differences between these figures and those contained in Table 2.

possibilities of analysing the implications this type of relationship between pledges has for their fulfilment. Accordingly, no hypothesis was formulated regarding the effect of direct dissensus between parties. Nevertheless, the most common pattern of direct dissensus between parties relates to the fourth hypothesis on status quo pledges. This pattern consists of issues on which at least one party pledged support for a continuation of the status quo on a specific policy issue while one or more parties supported a policy change on that issue. A total of 38 such issues are found in the data from the twelve election programmes considered here. Given the strong support for the hypothesis that status quo pledges are more likely to be fulfilled than action pledges, a bias towards the status quo might be expected when this pattern of dissensus between parties occurs. In other words, it may be expected that action pledges which are dissensually related to pledges calling for a maintenance of the status quo, are less likely to be fulfilled than action pledges which are not. The statistics in the row labelled 'dissensus' in Table 8 allow this expectation to be tested. Although the (exponentiated) coefficient is in the expected direction (less than one), it is not statistically significant. Therefore, the results do not provide convincing evidence of a bias toward the status quo as a result of dissensus between parties.

Finally, it was hypothesised that support for pledges in the coalition agreement increases the likelihood that they will be fulfilled (hypothesis 7). There is strong evidence in support of this hypothesis. Table 7 contains information on the fulfilment of pledges that were supported in the coalition agreements. Note that only pledges that were first supported in an election programme and then repeated in the coalition agreement are considered here. Policy initiatives contained in a coalition agreement that were not preceded by a manifesto commitment were excluded. At least some policy action was taken in line with 138 of the 168 pledges (82%) of the prospective governing parties

Table 7. The fulfilment of election pledges that were supported in the coalition agreements

1986	PvdA	D66	CDA	VVD
Fully	43% (3)	18% (2)	47% (8)	64% (18)
Partially	0	9% (1)	12% (2)	11% (3)
Not	57% (4)	73% (8)	41% (7)	25% (7)
Total supported in agreement	100% (7)	100% (11)	100% (17)	100% (28)
1989	PvdA	D66	CDA	VVD
Fully	48% (11)	50% (9)	65% (15)	62% (8)
Partially	30% (7)	17% (3)	4% (1)	15% (2)
Not	22% (5)	33% (6)	30% (7)	23% (3)
Total supported in agreement	100% (23)	100% (18)	99% (23)	100% (13)
1994	PvdA	D66	CDA	VVD
Fully	80% (16)	76% (25)	39% (7)	79% (19)
Partially	20% (4)	21% (7)	44% (8)	8% (2)
Not	0	3% (1)	17% (3)	13% (3)
Total supported in agreement	100% (20)	100% (33)	100% (18)	100% (24)

Percentages of the total numbers of pre-election pledges also supported in the coalition agreements after the elections that were fully, partially, and not fulfilled (N). Governing parties in bold.

supported in the agreements. This is a considerably higher percentage than the one pertaining to the fulfilment of governing parties' election pledges as a whole (61%; see Table 2). Similarly, Table 7 shows that the majority of opposition parties' pledges supported in the coalition agreements were fulfilled at least partially: 42 of the 67 supported pledges (63%). In addition to supporting the above hypothesis, the information in Table 7 suggests that governing parties' pledges supported in the coalition agreement are more likely to be fulfilled than opposition parties' pledges supported in the agreement.

The results of the multivariate analyses presented in Table 8 provide a more sophisticated test of the seventh hypothesis. Controlling for the effects of the other hypothesised variables of influence, election pledges that were supported in the subsequent coalition agreement were six times more likely to be acted upon than those that were not.

Before specifying the multivariate model presented in Table 8, the variables that influence the likelihood of support for pledges in the coalition agreements were considered. This pre-analysis was necessary to investigate the relationships between the effect of support in the agreements and the effects of the other variables discussed above. Briefly, some of the variables that were expected to influence the likelihood of pledge fulfilment were found to influence the likelihood of support for pledges in the coalition agreement. Specifically, pledges made by prospective governing parties, that were the subject of consensus between parties, and those that were highly salient to the parties that made them were more likely to be supported in the coalition agreements than those that were not (Thomson 1999b). Analytically, this means that support for pledges in the agreement *could* be conceptualised as an intervening variable. In other words, the effect on fulfilment of some of the other independent variables might be mediated by the support for pledges in the coalition agreement.

Whether or not this is the case can be tested by estimating models with and without the supposed intervening variable (DeMaris 1992: 56–60). If the coalition agreement is indeed an intervening variable, then a model excluding this term should lead to an increase in the size and significance of the mediated variables. The model excluding this term did not, with one exception, lead to an increase in the strength or significance of the remaining coefficients.⁹ This exception concerns the effect of consensus between prospective governing and opposition parties on pledge fulfilment. When excluding the variable ‘Support in coalition agreement’ from the model, the coefficient relating to ‘Consensus between governing and opposition parties’ increases in size and strength (from Exp(b) 1.5; $p = 0.16$ in Table 3 to Exp(b) 2.0; $p = 0.01$). This indicates that when formulating coalition agreements, the negotiating parties endeavour to include support for policy initiatives that enjoy broad support, such as those also favoured by opposition parties. However, on the whole, support for pledges in the coalition agreement should not be described as an intervening variable.

Conclusion

For democratic theory, possibly the most important finding of this research concerns the comparison of the fulfilment of pledges supported by parties that entered governing coalitions in the Netherlands, with pledges supported by parties that formed the opposition after these elections. As hypothesised, governing parties’ pledges were significantly more likely to be acted upon than opposition parties’ pledges. This finding provides evidence of the applicability of the mandate model of the programme to policy linkage during this

Table 8. The fulfilment of election pledges

	Exp(b)
Constant (B)	-2.6***
Government	2.2***
Ministry	1.6*
Saliency	1.0
Status quo	0.6
Consensus between governing parties	3.1***
Consensus between governing and opposition parties	1.5
Consensus between opposition parties	1.1
Dissensus	1.5
Coalition agreement	6.0***
Year 1989	2.0***
Year 1994	3.0***
G _M	171.1 ($p = 0, 00$)
R _L ²	0.26
N	677

Multiple logistic regression analyses of the fulfilment of election pledges in the 1986, 1989, and 1994 election programmes of the four main Dutch parties. With the exception of the constant (B), the numbers refer to the exponentiated coefficients, and can therefore be interpreted as odds ratios.

* $p < 0.10$; *** $p < 0.01$.

period. This study is the first in which the fulfilment of pledges in a coalition system of government is examined. It was found that at least some policy actions were taken on a majority of the election pledges made by parties that went on to form coalition governments (61%). In the light of this evidence, it cannot be argued simply that parties do not fulfil their election pledges. The fact that substantial proportions of the Dutch parties' pledges were fulfilled suggests that coalition systems are not as handicapped in this respect as a crude examination of formal institutions might suggest. This is due to the scarcity of direct confrontations between parties in terms of the specific policy proposals they support. This is an important characteristic of party competition that has been found to be present in many party systems (Budge, Robertson & Hearl 1987). In other words, the realisation of one party's policy initiative may be in competition with those of other parties, in the sense that the enactment of that proposal requires resources that cannot then be used for the enactment of those other proposals. However, it is seldom the case that policy proposals exclude, by definition, the enactment of initiatives supported by other parties. Despite the fact that substantial proportions of the election

pledges made in the election programmes of Dutch governing parties were fulfilled, substantially higher proportions of pledges made by British parties that entered government office were acted upon. This finding supports the hypothesis that governing parties' pledges are less likely to be fulfilled in coalition systems than in single party governments.

The saliency approach (Klingemann et al. 1994) has also been used to study the programme to policy linkage. This approach focuses on the congruence between the emphases parties place on various policy themes and subsequent government spending patterns in related policy areas. In the saliency approach it is assumed, for example, that parties which place more emphasis on the policy theme of 'law and order' in their election programme are in favour of more public expenditure on related policy areas. One way of comparing the saliency approach with the pledge approach is to compare the empirical results generated by both. These would appear to differ considerably. Notably, the particularly damning conclusions regarding the programme to policy linkage in the Netherlands stated by the proponents of the saliency approach were not replicated in the present research. On the basis of findings generated within the framework of the saliency approach, it was argued that the Dutch Labour Party and the Conservative Liberal Party made a series of 'Faustian bargains' with the Christian Democrats, in which in exchange for participation in government office, they allowed policies to be pursued that were incongruent with their ideological preferences (Klingemann et al. 1994: 259–260). Further, using the saliency approach it was found that in the United Kingdom, opposition parties' election programmes were not less congruent with subsequent government policies than the election programmes of prospective governing parties (Klingemann et al. 1994: 261). This is at odds with findings based on the pledge approach (Royed 1996).

Of course, the saliency approach has been applied to a longer time period and to more countries than the pledge approach. Therefore, in order to identify the correspondence between the results of the two approaches adequately, and the conditions under which the results correspond and diverge, more data are needed on the fulfilment of election pledges, both in government periods in the past and by governments in more countries. Such data are also needed to investigate the effects of variation in socio-economic conditions and government institutions. It cannot be argued convincingly that differences between the two approaches are due to the fact that one is based on appropriate measurements of the programme to policy linkage while the other is not. The proven importance of thematic emphases in the context of party competition, and the significant levels of congruence between these emphases and subsequent spending patterns mean that the results of the saliency approach cannot be dismissed in this way (Budge et al. 1987; Klingemann

et al. 1994). Similarly, existing research on election pledges shows that these constitute an important element of political discourse. No study of the congruence between election programmes and subsequent government policies can dismiss the results of either of these approaches legitimately.

One of the advantages of the pledge approach is that it facilitates the study of mechanisms of cabinet governance: for example, those involving the distribution of ministerial portfolios, consensus between parties and the coalition agreement. It was found that election pledges are significantly more likely to be acted upon if a party that supported them receives the relevant ministerial post. This is a particularly surprising finding because there are specific features of cabinet governance in the Netherlands that lead to the expectation of a weak effect of the distribution of ministerial portfolios in this regard. The implication is that if an effect is present in the Dutch case, then a much stronger effect will be evident in other countries, where such mitigating features are absent. In comparison to the other effects identified in this analysis, the effect associated with the allocation of ministries is not particularly strong. The combinations of election pledges that are fulfilled are not determined by the structure of ministerial portfolios. There are clearly other ways in which coalition parties seek to ensure the fulfilment of their election pledges. One of these concerns the coalition agreement.

The findings of this study confirm that the formulation of the coalition agreement is a stage of crucial importance in Dutch politics. Election pledges supported in the coalition agreements are significantly more likely to be fulfilled than those that are not. This is an important finding, because the formulation of the coalition agreement takes place in a decision making situation that is quite distinct from policy making during the lifetime of governments. In related research, it has been shown that these closed negotiations enable party representatives to impose their own preferred policy priorities on the government's policy agenda. In particular, pledges to which parties attached higher levels of saliency are significantly more likely to be supported in the agreement than those to which they attach lower levels of saliency (Thomson 1999b). Party representatives are severely constrained in their ability to impose priorities in this way during the governing periods. Indeed, the findings presented here show that pledges which are particularly salient to parties are no more likely to be congruent with subsequent government actions than pledges to which they attach lower levels of saliency.

Strong evidence was found in support of the hypothesis that pledges to maintain the status quo are more likely to be congruent with subsequent government policies than pledges to take policy actions. This accords with the conclusions of an extensive qualitative investigation that was also carried out in this research project. The amount of change involved in a policy pro-

posal affects the difficulty governments encounter when attempting to fulfil it. The pledges identified in the manifestos were ‘doable’, in the sense that they fall within the authority of the government, and few constitute radical departures from prior policy developments. This does not, however, mean that the fulfilment of pledges is of little consequence for the societal groups concerned. There are numerous examples of pledges on issues of importance, such as the coupling between incomes and welfare benefits, the creation of employment in the collective sector, income taxes, and shop closing hours. Whether or not these pledges were fulfilled had important consequences for substantial numbers of citizens.

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Notes

1. To the extent that opposition parties have been included in research on pledge fulfilment, the evidence supports the above hypothesis. It cannot, however, be said that empirical support for this hypothesis is a foregone conclusion in the context of the cases selected for analysis in the present research. Studies on US party platforms show that parties which lost the presidential elections saw substantial proportions of their pledges fulfilled: sometimes as many as the presidential party (Pomper & Lederman 1980; Royed 1996).
2. Coalition agreements contain specifications of what the prospective coalitions intend to do when in office, rather than what they do not intend to do: explicit rejections of parties’ election pledges in the coalition agreements are rare. It is for this reason that the seventh hypothesis is phrased in terms of the effect of support for pledges in the agreement, rather than the effect of rejection of pledges in the agreement.
3. Royed’s study was, to my knowledge, the first to test the reliability of the identification of election pledges. Royed reports an inter-coder reliability of 84 percent (1996: 79–80). A research assistant independently coded a selection of pages from the election programmes I analysed. Of the 226 statements we identified as election pledges, we agreed on 199: a reliability of 88 percent, comparable with that reported by Royed. The most important difference between the definition of election pledges used here, and that used by Royed is that the present study is confined to policy actions, whereby ‘outcome pledges’ are excluded. In section 4 of this article, the data collected by Royed will be manipulated to exclude these outcome pledges, enabling a comparison with pledge fulfilment in the Netherlands.

4. Subject area specialists were asked to judge the fulfilment of 110 of the pledges made prior to the 1994 election. On the basis of the three category measurement of fulfilment, there was an inter-coder reliability, measured by Cohen's Kappa, of 0.70. For the dichotomous fulfilment variable there was a Cohen's Kappa of 0.78. As a rule of thumb, Kappa values of around 0.60 are generally considered to be satisfactory, while values of around 0.80 indicate that the measure is strongly reliable.
5. Pledges to maintain the status quo are treated distinctly from action pledges in the data set on which the multivariate analysis is performed. A value of 1 on the dependent variable indicates that a policy action was taken that changed the status quo in the direction of an action pledge, if any such pledge was made. A value of 0 on the dependent variable indicates that the status quo was maintained on the issue concerned, which may have been congruent with a pledge to maintain the status quo. I am grateful to Tom Snijders at the Department of Statistics and Methodology, University of Groningen, for proposing this organisation of the data set, which makes the analysis more powerful and elegant than it would otherwise have been. Tests for collinearity were performed before running the logistic regression. Bivariate correlations between each of the independent variables were calculated: the range of the absolute values of these correlations was 0.00 to 0.56, mean 0.16. Linear regressions were performed on each of the independent variables, using the remaining independent variables as predictors: the R^2 ranged from 0.18 to 0.56, mean 0.34.
6. It is also possible to compare the findings on the fulfilment of pledges in the Netherlands with the results of pledge fulfilment in the United Kingdom obtained by studies that cover different time periods than that of Royed: for example, Rose (1980), and Rallings (1987). The results of these comparisons are the same. Royed's study is featured here because the definitions she uses are explicated most clearly, and the data she collected were made available for adjustment on the basis of the definitions used in the present research. This enables the comparison to be as valid as possible.
7. The status quo hypothesis was also tested using an alternative research design with the same result. A separate logistic regression was carried out for each election programme, in which status quo pledges were treated in the same way as action pledges, and the dependent variable was simply whether or not the pledge was fulfilled. The advantage of this research design is that it allows the status quo hypothesis to be tested while controlling for the effects of the other hypothesised independent variables. The disadvantage is that the analyses are fragmented and the statistical power unnecessarily limited. The coefficient in the row labelled 'Status quo' in Table 8 should be interpreted as follows. With regard to the policy issues on which action pledges and/or status quo pledges were made, policy actions, in the direction proposed by an action pledge if any such pledge was made, were less likely to occur (0.6 times as likely), if one of the parties pledged to maintain the status quo on that issue. It should be noted that this coefficient is not significant and that it does not relate directly to the hypothesis under investigation (hypothesis 4).
8. I am grateful to Paul Pennings of the Free University of Amsterdam for making the Manifestos Research Group data available. Quadratic and logarithmic transformations of this indicator of saliency were experimented with. In addition, an alternative measure of saliency was applied: the extent to which the party that made the pledge also devoted attention to the same issue in its previous election programmes. None of the results provided support for the hypothesis.
9. The model excluding the government agreement as a variable that influences the likelihood of pledge fulfilment was as follows: Constant b: 0.9***; Ministry, Exp(b): 1.7**;

Saliency, $\text{Exp}(b)$: 1.0; Status quo, $\text{Exp}(b)$: 0.5; Consensus between governing parties, $\text{Exp}(b)$: 3.6***; Consensus between governing and opposition parties, $\text{Exp}(b)$: 2.0**; Consensus between opposition parties, $\text{Exp}(b)$: 1.4; Dissensus, $\text{Exp}(b)$: 1.8; Year 1989, $\text{Exp}(b)$: 2.1***; Year 1994, $\text{Exp}(b)$: 3.4***. G_M : 171.1, $p = 0.00$; R_L^2 : 0.20; $N = 677$.

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